

Spring 2018

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AMBS window

Paying it forward

Students integrate their learnings in projects that serve their communities

In their final year of study, AMBS Master of Arts in Christian Formation students complete a final project — a ministry program for spiritual formation to be implemented in a specific setting. We've asked four students to share about their projects and how AMBS has prepared them for ministry.

Jeff Boehr of Bluffton, Ohio, is creating a two-part workshop to help people who are approaching the last years of their life explore what it looks like to make meaning of this life stage together. It's designed to be offered in retirement homes or congregations. Jeff is a member of First Mennonite Church of Bluffton and attends Southside Fellowship in Elkhart.

In the workshops we'll worship together and address topics such as formation, God's presence and being attentive to each other and to God, giving creative responses about what we've heard from each other and what we notice in ourselves. I hope this will be a process that people can continue to do together, forming practices to help them through the losses they'll face.



I'm interested in exploring their experiences. Has the church helped them, or not? How are we still being formed as people when we're also experiencing loss?

Thinking about my own life stage and my parents' — and my Clinical Pastoral Education internship at a hospital — really brought this into focus for me. In the hospital I saw people working to make meaning in a time of change or loss. Moments of re-orientation can really throw us off if we're not intentionally thinking about what they might mean for us. Engaging what it means to live life with God and with each other in AMBS classes also inspired me to explore this topic.

Following graduation, I could imagine doing chaplaincy work in a retirement setting. I'm also open to serving in a congregation or in the wider church.

Sister Ruby Fair-Miller of South Bend, Indiana, is developing a pastoral and spiritual care ministry for people who

have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and dementia and their caregivers. She's a member of New Life Fellowship Ministry of South Bend.

The flame for this project was sparked during an AMBS class on Pastoral Counseling and Theology with Dr. Daniel [Schipani] and in my Pastoral Counseling



Practicum. I was a chaplain intern at Signature Healthcare in South Bend, where 95 percent of the residents have Alzheimer's or dementia. I saw the hurt and brokenness of the caregivers — the children or the spouse — and the patients themselves. My ministry is to bring the gospel of God's grace into their lives.

I still serve at Signature Healthcare as a volunteer chaplain, leading Bible studies and Sunday devotions every other week. I've found I can start praying the Lord's

Above: A Foundations of Worship and Preaching class meets on campus in June 2017. Credit: Peter Ringenberg

PAYING IT FORWARD (continued)

Prayer or reciting the 23rd Psalm, and patients will remember every word. At the same time, they may say, Who am I? How did I get here? I want to bring the presence of God into that lost person's life and the caregiver's life, and to let them know they're not alone.

The project right now is just set up for me, but I'm hoping to get other churches involved. As faith communities, we can take some of the burden off of the hurting caregivers.

The Lord sent me to AMBS to find my passion — reconciling people back to God. I've had a blessed journey at AMBS. I'm working on becoming a certified chaplain, an advocate for those with cognitive impairments and those suffering from mind-altering dysfunctions.

Jonah Yang of Cottage Grove, Minnesota, is creating a presentation for first- and second-generation Hmong Christians in the U.S. and Southeast Asia about the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and Missio Dei #18, "What is an Anabaptist Christian?" by Palmer Becker. He is a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis.

I chose this topic because Hmong Christians have varied practices of footwashing. Reconciliation is a hard topic for the Hmong. For example, I either trust or don't trust you forever. I believe that footwashing will help them surrender their pride and become people who serve instead of people who receive.

Reconciliation equals re-establishing relationship. I hope to teach Hmong



Christians to forgive and forget their past. There are many great men in the community who are not willing to let go of some of their authority, but teaching about forgiveness and reconciliation could help them to consider having a new perspective on Christian life.

My favorite AMBS class is God's Shalom and the Church's Witness. One essential example I learned from the professor was to ask his child to forgive him. Therefore, even though I am a father to my children, I must admit my guilt if I commit a wrong against them.

After graduation, I would like to use my time to do more presentations to my Hmong Christian and non-Christian fellows in the U.S. or Southeast Asia. I also want to collaborate with Mennonite Mission Network and regional conferences to develop training materials for the Hmong Mennonite churches in North America and Asia so that church members can grow in the Anabaptist way.

Miriam Zehr is associate pastor of worship and education at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Ohio, which is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year over three weekends — one focusing on history, one on music and one on homecoming/reunions. Her project is

to plan three worship services: one was a kick-off for the year in January, and the other two will be for the historical focus weekend in April.

Worship planning is one of the favorite parts of my job. I also have interest in doing more collaborative worship planning and wanted to experiment with this project. A group of four is working with me. Since we are celebrating our 200th anniversary, I thought this would be a natural fit.

I hope that in reflecting on the past and the legacy that has been left for us, we can be grateful for the ways God has



been faithful to this church community and for the ways Oak Grove has impacted people's lives within the family of faith, the local community and the wider church. I also

hope the congregation will be challenged to consider what legacy we want to leave for future generations. For example, on Jan. 14 we invited worship participants to hang leaves on a "legacy tree"; on one side they were to write a spiritual legacy they had received, and on the other, a legacy they hoped to leave.

My AMBS degree has been in process many years; the positive side of that is that I have taken courses while working as a pastor and could integrate my learnings. I have found the courses on spiritual formation and worship very inspiring and helpful. • — Annette Brill Bergstresser

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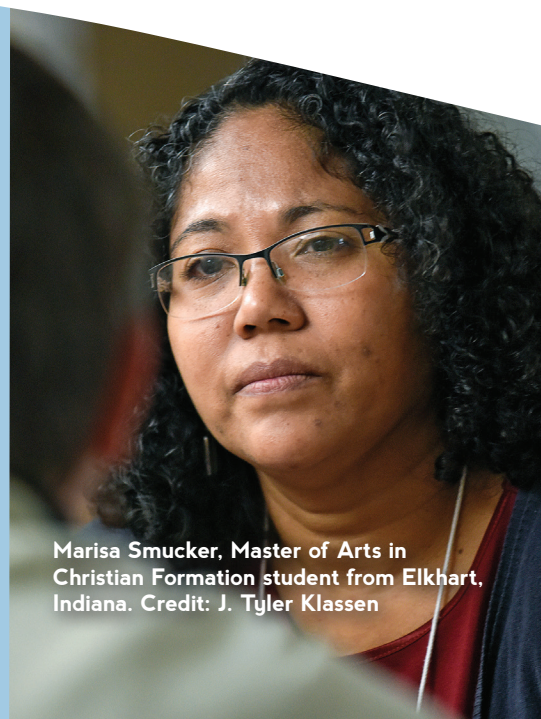
Develop holistic leadership skills

AMBS's **Master of Arts in Christian Formation** program equips students for:

- congregational leadership in faith formation
- spiritual care in the congregation
- spiritual direction
- long-term visitation and spiritual companionship
- congregational teaching and training

Scholarships and financial aid are available.

Learn more: ambs.edu/academics
Try a course: ambs.edu/onecourse •



Marisa Smucker, Master of Arts in Christian Formation student from Elkhart, Indiana. Credit: J. Tyler Klassen



Forming confident and caring Christian leaders



Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Faith
Formation and Culture

- **My goal for students** is to be formed as confident and caring disciples of Jesus Christ in heart, mind and spirit.
- **I want them to leave AMBS with the ability to** engage culture both critically and compassionately.
- **I want students to be the kind of people who** are continually formed in faith and who can nurture spiritual, emotional and relational growth in others.

How does focusing on the Bible shape the way you approach your vocation?

Reading, interpreting and applying biblical wisdom to our lives today requires a similar approach to culture: reading, understanding and discerning how we are formed by culture. If we ignore how we are shaped by culture, it is easy to simply dismiss culture as all bad, on the one hand, or to uncritically embrace it and miss how it misshapes us, on the other. Christians must constantly be asking whether we are being formed as disciples of Jesus Christ who seek restoration of relationship with God, with each other and with creation — or formed as disciples of fearful nations and consumer culture.

How does studying in your discipline prepare students to engage the challenges of the day and work toward positive transformation?

Christian leaders are at their best when they are also Christian learners. The way I combine faith formation and cultural hermeneutics helps Christian leaders continue to learn to distinguish

between easy, quick, short-term and false promises of salvation offered in the dominant narratives of nationalism, consumerism and militarism — and the Gospel story and invitation of a more difficult but patient and enduring path toward spiritual, physical and social salvation offered in Jesus Christ. •

Andy Brubacher Kaethler grew up in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario; Bangladesh and Ghana. He has worked in Christian formation for more than 25 years in educational, conference, congregational and camp settings. After coming to AMBS in 2003, he launched !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth (see below). He also teaches in areas of theology, culture and philosophy.

Above: MDiv Connect students David Johnson of Portland, Oregon, and Deb Coates of Brush Prairie, Washington, during orientation week in August 2017. **Credit:** Peter Ringenberg. **Left:** Andy Brubacher Kaethler. **Credit:** Jason Bryant. **Below:** 2017 !Explore participant Jonathon Snyder of Goshen, Indiana, plays Frisbee. **Credit:** Jacob Liechty

!Explore = space to listen for God's call

AMBS's !Explore program provides students in grades 10–12 an opportunity to explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices and biblical engagement and listen for God's call. The program includes a congregational internship and a Group Experience (July 3–18, 2018).

This year's !Explore event pastors say:

- "I'm looking forward to the new things God will do when we all get together to explore what it means to follow Jesus in some newly imagined ways." — **Cathy Stoner**, MACF student from South Bend, Indiana

- "I expect young people to take the ministry of God seriously. I want young people to experience the blessings of God's work in the world, as I have." — **Naún Cerrato**, MAPS student from Goshen, Indiana
- "I'm excited to walk alongside some young, vibrant minds who are exploring God's calling in their lives and the theology that shapes them." — **Scott Litwiller**, MDiv student from Delavan, Illinois

Scholarships are available. Encourage someone you know to apply! ambbs.edu/explore •





Giving thanks for the “cloud of support”

Ken Hawkey

This is my 10th year as fundraiser for AMBS. With the average tenure in this profession being 18 months, you may wonder why I have stayed. It’s because of the people I get to meet. I visit people from many walks of life, from different family systems, with different experiences and outlooks on life. I talk with people of differing political, social, economic and religious points of view. Many of them have served in many capacities as mentors, caregivers, compassionate supporters and people who go the extra mile. They are passionate for living as Christ would want them to.

These people all believe that AMBS is important. Alumni tell me how life-changing their time at AMBS has been. Others have never set foot on campus but look to AMBS for their leaders. When I visit, I get to tell them about the amazing

things happening at the seminary. They get to tell me what “sets their hearts on fire.” At the end of a busy week when I have visited 20 to 30 people, I feel refreshed and inspired.

In Hebrews 12, the writer says that because we are “surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,” we are able to run the race set out for us. I have been exceptionally blessed to meet many people in the cloud of support that surrounds AMBS. It’s because of this support that AMBS can continue to educate and form disciples of Christ into leaders for the Church.

Through partnering with AMBS, you are making a real difference in the world. I thank God for you and for your passion, prayers, friendship and faithful support. ●
— Ken Hawkey, Senior Associate Director of Advancement, plans to retire June 30.

On supporting AMBS ...

“During my years at AMBS, I was blessed by people, friendships and classes/readings that brought emotional/spiritual healing and unexpectedly, a new vocation for me. I wanted to give back to AMBS so that this setting will continue to be an avenue where the Spirit ministers to those seeking and brings unexpected blessings.”

— CarolSue H. Borkholder (MDiv 1995) of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is the lead chaplain at Bronson Battle Creek Hospital. She is a member of the Legacy Circle and has included AMBS in her estate plans. Contact an advancement associate to learn more about planned giving to AMBS.



Hearts on Fire Day

Join us online and in spirit!

Hearts on Fire Day is a time to show your support and express how your heart is on fire for God’s reconciling mission.

Share your photo!

Download a sign at ambs.edu/heartsonfire and fill in how your heart is on fire for God’s mission like MA: Peace Studies student **Naún Cerrato** did (at left). Email a photo of yourself with the sign to development@ambs.edu between now and April 13 or post it on facebook.com/followAMBS on April 13. Help spread **#heartsonfireday** on Facebook and Twitter on April 13! Watch online to see students and staff share their messages of support.

Support the AMBS Fund!

Our goal is to receive 150 donations on April 13. All gifts go towards our AMBS Fund so that AMBS can continue to equip leaders who are rooted in the Word and growing in Christ. No gift is too small — we’re counting hearts! Give online at ambs.edu/give or call in a gift to 800-964-2627 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ●

2018 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition

PALMER BECKER



A long-time church leader, pastor, missionary, church planter, author and educator has been named the recipient of AMBS's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition for 2018. **Palmer Becker** of Kitchener, Ontario, who earned a Master

of Religious Education from Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS — now AMBS) in 1965, will receive the award on April 29 in his home congregation, Waterloo (Ontario) North Mennonite Church. He will also be the featured speaker at AMBS's May 6 commencement service.

Becker is the author of 15 books, including the widely used booklet, *Missio Dei* No. 18: "What is an Anabaptist Christian?" (available in 18 languages), and an expansion of that resource called *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith* (Herald, 2017). Since 2007, he has taught short courses on the subject of Anabaptist identity in more than 15 countries worldwide with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

"It's an honor to be recognized for living out core values that were, in a major way, instilled in me at MBS," Becker reflected. "I hope this recognition will be a witness to prospective church workers who are looking for a training program that has a passion for biblical studies, Anabaptist theology and peacemaking."

Becker grew up near Freeman, South Dakota, and attended Freeman Junior College (FJC), where he met Ardys Preheim. They married in 1958 and have four grown children. Becker also earned a B.A. from Goshen (Indiana) College; did graduate studies at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia; and earned a D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

Becker discerned a call to ministry while at FJC and Goshen College and

during a term of alternative service in Taiwan, where he served first as director of a mobile medical team and then with China Sunday School Association. He came to MBS in 1963 to pursue Christian education and pastoral ministry.

"The biblical studies at MBS prepared me for the mystery and joy of meeting and obeying God," he said. He credited William Klassen, Clarence Bauman, Paul Miller, Leland Harder and Erland Waltner as particular professors who influenced him.

Becker has served as a pastor in five states and provinces. He also was executive secretary of the Commission on Home Ministries of the General Conference Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas; chaplain at Menno Simons Centre and the University of British Columbia; and director of the Hesston (Kansas) College Pastoral Ministries Program.

While preparing to give the keynote address at a Hesston College conference on "Discipling New Believers from an Anabaptist Perspective" in 2002, Becker said three core statements came to him: "Jesus is the center of our faith; community is the center of our life; and reconciliation is the center of our work."

"No doubt these had been rooted in my study of *The Anabaptist Vision* by H.S. Bender," he added.

Becker's address came to be published in Mennonite Mission Network's *Missio Dei* series. He noted that Stuart Murray's book *The Naked Anabaptist* was released around the same time, "helping Mennonites recognize they have something valuable to share."

"We are in something of an identity and faith crisis concerning who we are as Mennonites," he said. "Old methods and expressions aren't working anymore, and people are leaving the church — especially young people — and yet there is a search for community and desire for significant ministry. Many are finding the core values found in 'What is an Anabaptist Christian?' to be of substantial help in declaring their identity and faith." •

— Annette Brill Bergstresser

From the AMBS Alumni Director



AMBS has decided to incorporate the alumni newsletter into the spring and fall issues of *AMBS Window*. In this first combined issue, focused on Christian formation, it seems serendipitous that this year's recipient of the Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition earned his degree in religious education. Palmer Becker's ministry as an educator, pastor, administrator and author has been a rich blessing to the church, and his recent work to interpret Anabaptism for the 21st century is invigorating the global church.

Since 1945, AMBS and its predecessor schools have conferred six Bachelor of Religious Education degrees (all men); 71 Master of Religious Education degrees (43 men, 28 women); 19 Master of Arts in Christian Education degrees (13 men, 6 women); and 45 Master of Arts in Christian Formation degrees (11 men, 34 women). In addition, some graduates did an emphasis on education or spirituality within a Master of Arts: Theological Studies degree.

Over time, the focus of these degrees shifted from education (with faculty Bertha Harder and Ross Bender) to formation (with faculty Marcus Smucker, Marlene Kropf, Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Rachel Miller Jacobs and Daniel Schrock). We have also seen a growth in the percentage of women seeking these degrees. Alumni have served the church in a wide variety of roles, including Christian education, youth ministry, worship and spiritual direction •

— Janeen Bertsche Johnson

ALUMNI NEWS NOTES

ALUMNI NEWS DEGREE ABBREVIATIONS

- MDiv: Master of Divinity
- MAPS: Master of Arts: Peace Studies
- MATS: Master of Arts: Theological Studies
- BDiv: Bachelor of Divinity
- MRE: Master of Religious Education

STAY CONNECTED TO AMBS ALUMNI

The AMBS Alumni Facebook Group has more than 670 members who have completed 12 or more hours at AMBS. It features news about and articles by our alumni: facebook.com/groups/ambsalumni

If you have alumni updates to share, send them to jbjohnson@ambs.edu or post them directly in the AMBS Alumni Facebook Group.

ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

Thanks to the generous giving of our alumni, we have now fully funded an alumni scholarship that will be awarded in the 2018–19 academic year. The alumni giving project for the fall of 2017 was signage for the seminary's sustainability efforts; so far, those gifts total \$2,056.

Two AMBS alumni received the 2017 Outstanding Alumni Awards from Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas. **Harold Thieszen** (1951–53) pastored for 27 years and served as development staff for Mennonite Mutual Aid, AMBS (1987–1994) and several organizations in Kansas. **Kate Becker** (MATS 2007) is a program and policy adviser for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In October, Goshen (Indiana) College dedicated the Aschliman Peace Arts Collection on campus in honor of **Kathryn Aschliman** (MRE 1959), Professor Emerita of Education. The collection provides materials to teach peace to children.

Walter Paetkau (MDiv 1966) was one of 26 recipients of the 2017 British Columbia Achievement awards, which recognize the spirit, imagination and dedication of British Columbians to their communities.

John Kampen (MDiv 1975), Professor in the Dunn Chair in Biblical Interpretation at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, was Mennonite Church USA's representative at a Jewish-Christian dialogue sponsored by the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Synagogues in November.

Ed (MDiv 1976) and **Gay Kauffman** (MAPS 1990) will retire April 1 from congregational ministry in Calgary, Alberta, and move to the AMBS campus to serve as volunteer coordinators in the Church Leadership Center.

Dorothy Jean Weaver (MDiv 1977), Professor of New Testament at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia, has published *The Irony of Power: The Politics of God within Matthew's Narrative* (Pickwick, 2017) in the Studies in Peace and Scripture Series of AMBS's Institute of Mennonite Studies.

Nancy Kauffmann (MDiv 1982) will retire May 1 after more than eight years as Denominational Minister for Mennonite Church USA.

Brenda Martin Hurst (MDiv 1986) is Director of the new Thriving in Ministry Initiative, a Lilly Endowment-supported program at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, and Director of Pastoral and Theological Studies at EMU–Lancaster (Pennsylvania).

Karen Martens Zimmerly (MATS 1986) and **Terry Zimmerly** (MDiv 1988) are sharing a role as pastors at First Mennonite Church in Iowa City. Karen had been serving as Mennonite Church Canada's Executive Minister for Formation and Pastoral Leadership.

Roy (MDiv 1989) and **Maren Hange** (MDiv 1993), Co-Pastors of Charlottesville (Virginia) Mennonite Church, have participated in the clergy witness against White supremacist rallies in Charlottesville in August and in the ongoing work for healing.

Marilyn Rudy-Froese (MDiv 1992) has been appointed Church Leadership Minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She is currently interim pastor at East Zorra Mennonite Church in Tavistock, Ontario.

Arden Shank (MDiv 1985) has retired after 16 years as president and CEO of Neighborhood Housing Services of South Florida, a local nonprofit organization that collaborates with residents and other stakeholders to stabilize neighborhoods and develop sustainable housing. It provides a full spectrum of homeownership services in English and Spanish to assist potential buyers in reaching their homeownership dream. NHSSF has done foreclosure prevention counseling for 11,000 families and helped more than 2,700

new homebuyers since 2003. Before moving to Miami, Shank was director of the LaCasa nonprofit housing agency in Goshen, Indiana, for 13 years. He notes that his experience at AMBS prepared him for these roles by teaching him to think critically and ethically, communicate effectively as a writer and speaker, engage disagreements in respectful ways, and structure justice. He is now a consultant for nonprofits in housing and community development. •

Right: Arden Shank. Credit: Brian Yoder Schlabach/Goshen College



David B. Miller (MDiv 1993, current faculty) led pastoral care and missional leadership workshops in Tanzania in November for pastors in the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

Zulma Prieto (MAPS 1997) was selected as Honorary Rotarian of the Year in 2017 by the Goshen Rotary Club for her efforts over the past 25 years to inform the Latino community and build bridges between the Latino and Anglo communities through the *El Puente* newspaper.

Ricardo Liso (MDiv 1998), a member of the pastoral team of Buenos Aires Anabaptist Mennonite Church, represented the church in a joint Declaration of Commitment aimed at developing new projects and programs under the umbrella, “Ecumenical Network of Theological Education.”

In January, **Bob Yoder** (MDiv 2001) completed 14 years of serving Goshen College as Campus Pastor and Assistant Professor of Youth Ministry. He is now an Advancement Associate at AMBS.

Ryan Good (MATS 2006) joined the Washington (D.C.) Community Scholars’ Center team in August after completing his Ph.D. in Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He is teaching courses on the urban landscape and community development and placing students in internships in the D.C. area.

God’s Country: Faith, Hope and the Future of the Rural Church (Herald, 2017) by **Brad Roth** (MDiv 2006), Pastor of West Zion Mennonite Church in Moundridge, Kansas, received an award

of merit (second place) in *Christianity Today’s* 2018 book awards in the church/pastoral leadership category.

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis (MATS 2008, current staff) was a presenter at Calvin College’s 10th Annual Animals and the Kingdom of God lectures in April 2017.

Kelbessa Muleta Demena (MDiv 2012) chairs the board of Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia and serves as Vice President of Meserete Kristos Church, the largest global Mennonite denomination.

Terry Shue (MDiv 2011) will conclude his role as Director of Leadership Development for Mennonite Church USA in May.

Sarah Thompson (MDiv 2011) helped provide training in nonviolent action to Charlottesville (Virginia) clergy in 2017 through her role as Christian Peacemaker Teams’ Executive Director, which she has now concluded.

Ashlee Pierson (MDiv 2013) organized a mental health and spirituality conference called “Closing the Gap” in October 2017 in Norfolk, Virginia.

Kyle Metzger (MAPS 2014) helped organize a “Blessed are the Peacemakers Conference” in July 2017 in Huntington, Indiana.

Martin Navarro (MDiv 2014) is Associate Conference Minister for Hispanic Ministries for Illinois Mennonite Conference and a Stewardship Consultant with Everence, serving Hispanic Anabaptist churches.

DEATHS

James Reusser (MDiv 1954), 88, died Sept. 28. He served as a pastor in Ohio and Ontario.

Ralph Lebold (BDiv 1961) died Oct. 31. He served as Director of Theological Education at AMBS (1989–1997), managed the Conference-based Theological Education Program, taught Church and Ministry and supervised Congregational Supervised Pastoral Education.

David Cressman (BDiv 1966), 84, died July 25. He served as a pastor in Indiana and as Marketing Manager for Mennonite Publishing House.

Darrell Fast (BDiv 1966) died June 11. He served as a pastor in Ontario and Kansas and as Moderator of the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. He also was AMBS Board Chair and a member of the AMBS Alumni Council.

Dawn Ruth Nelson (MDiv 1979) died Aug. 21. She was a pastor, chaplain and spiritual director in Pennsylvania and author of *A Mennonite Woman: Exploring Spiritual Life and Identity*.

Brent Eash (MDiv 1999), 58, died Jan. 8. He was a farmer, pastor and conference leader in Indiana, and he also served as Chair of the AMBS Alumni Council.

Fred Lesakale (MAPS 2007) died April 7. He was serving on the staff of Asante Africa Foundation, a nonprofit organization providing children in Kenya and Tanzania with access to education.

Cyneatha Millsaps (MDiv 2008), Program Director for Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes, was the speaker for the Goshen (Indiana) College vocations banquet, held Feb. 6 at AMBS. She shared about how her voice was nurtured at AMBS and how she uses it to empower others.

More than 20 students from Goshen College attended, along with GC and AMBS faculty and several AMBS students.

Right: Cyneatha Millsaps speaks with GC student Katja Norton, daughter of Sharon Norton (MATS 2012). **Credit:** Janeen Bertsche Johnson





PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

SARA WENGER SHENK

Regaining fluency in the language of faith

I recently noticed a news story about an elderly man named Amadeo García García in Peru who is “the last person on earth to speak his native language, Taushiro.” Nicholas Casey reported in the *New York Times* in December 2017 that a combination of disease and exploitation forced the Taushiro tribe in the Amazon to the verge of extinction.

The heartbreak of losing everyone with whom one can communicate in one’s native language is unlike anything you or I have experienced. None of the languages we speak — English, Spanish, Swahili, Korean ... you name it — is remotely threatened. And yet I am deeply disquieted by a threat of extinction that is creeping up without us even noticing. I often wonder if we are losing our ability to talk meaningfully to each other about our faith.

A good friend who knows AMBS well observed to me last year that AMBS is a community where the language of faith is still fluently spoken. In many circles of church-related folk he relates to, he has

noted how readily we speak the languages of politics, profession, sport, popular culture and the market but stumble over the language of faith.

How might we as followers of Jesus become fluent again in our native language, our mother tongue? With the loss of faith language that we share in common, we’re susceptible to ideologies from the right and left. Our Anabaptist forebears resisted the empire with authoritative, public testimony. They were devoted to Jesus, encouraged by the Holy Spirit and sustained by Scripture and prayer. Many of them went to their deaths singing and exhorting one another to be strong and of good cheer. Immersing ourselves in Scripture, prayer, confession and worship will give us freedom to speak with true authority. Fluency, however, will only come with language practice day after day in communities of formation that prepare us to be ready always to give an account for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15). •

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN FORMATION



David Miller available to preach, teach

Invite AMBS Professor **David B. Miller** to teach or preach in your area on topics such as Christian leadership, missional church, healthy boundaries, holistic witness and more.

amsb.edu/lifelong-learning

“Reading the Bible with Jesus”

Host a workshop with itinerant Bible teacher **Bryan Moyer Suderman** for 1–2 days of digging deep into one of the Gospels to gain tools for reading and interpreting Scripture like Jesus did, in light of today’s world.

amsb.edu/workshops

Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

Develop a plan of study that matches your interests in this fully online 27-credit-hour certificate program. Ideal for international church leaders, bivocational pastors or other professionals.

amsb.edu/graduatecertificate

Take a course at AMBS

Options in **May, June and July** include Spirituality, Pastoral Care and Healing; Theology and Women’s Narrative; Biblical Storytelling; Ethics and Practice of Forgiveness; and more. Nonadmitted students get 50 percent off their first course! Also, check out audit options for AMBS grads. amsb.edu/onecourse

Rooted and Grounded: A Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship

Sept. 27–29, 2018. Explore ways of relating to the land that cultivate *shalom* among human beings, the rest of creation and God. amsb.edu/rootedandgrounded

Anabaptist Short Courses (noncredit): April–May

- *Cómo Se Formó la Biblia* (on-campus) with **Loren Johns**, Ph.D.
- *Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication* (online) with **Betty Pries**, C.Med., M.T.S.

amsb.edu/shortcourses

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

Explore your call to ministry in this 2-1/2-year distance-friendly program that features a five-unit online curriculum, biweekly mentor-mentee meetings and one visit to the AMBS region per year. Register by Aug. 7.

amsb.edu/journey

Spiritual Guidance Seminar

Prepare for a ministry of spiritual direction through this supervised program. Level 1 begins in August 2018 and Level 2 in October 2018. amsb.edu/lifelong-learning/seminars •